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## CURRENT OPINION

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### Hebrew Psalmody

In the January number of the *Harvard Theological Review*, that very versatile scholar, Rev. J. P. Peters of New York City, has some very pointed paragraphs concerning the critical study of the Book of Psalms. He begins with a criticism of the book of Charles F. Kent, *The Songs, Hymns, and Prayers of the Old Testament*. He takes this book as an example of what such a study ought not to be. Early in the discussion he gives as his reason for firing his batteries at this book that "it is symptomatic" of a large school of critics who are wrong in their methods. He complains that their "criticism has proceeded upon the basis of the subjective, rather than the objective." This class of critics, he says, straightway label that which they cannot understand as error and demand its change. We are in a period of reaction in the field of Old Testament criticism. There has been such a reaction from the iron-bound traditional view that the present-day critic starts out with the determination to discredit everything formerly maintained, and this has led to many errors.

Very little progress has been made in late years in the textual criticism of the Psalms. The text from which we must translate the Psalms today is substantially the same as that from which it was translated for the King James Version. The great improvement is from without and not from within—that is, the recovery of the ancient hymnology of the Egyptians, the Sumerians, and the Babylonians; and to these Peters would add, as an asset in translation, the Indian Vedas and the Persian Gathas. From these we should get a knowledge of the primitive mind as it expresses itself in hymns, and find, in a comparison of them with our own Book of Psalms, an aid to interpretation. After a long discus-

sion of these outside matters, the author undertakes to classify the psalms according to his own ideas. He would date the collections, for instance, as follows: book 1, the time of the pre-exilic temple at Jerusalem; books 2 and 3, the period of the Northern Kingdom; books 4 and 5, the period beginning with Nehemiah.

Of the difficulties of discovering dates from internal evidence, he uses a very unique illustration, the "Te Deum" of the American prayer book. All sorts of attempts have been made to date this hymn. Tradition says it was composed to be recited by Ambrose and Augustine, at the conversion or baptism of the latter, toward the end of the fourth century. The first evidence we have of its existence is the fifth century and from the Gallican church. As we have it, it is composite, consisting of three clearly marked parts: (1) a hymn to God as the Trinity; (2) a hymn to Christ; (3) a closing penitential psalm, which belongs in itself to neither the one nor the other of the hymns. How shall we date it? There are evidences of older hymns containing words and phrases similar to those found here. These primitive hymns go back centuries earlier. Shall we then assign the date of the "Te Deum" to that period? That is the method of these other critics. That is, the interpreter of the Psalms would take us back to the earliest elements discoverable in the individual psalm. To date the "Te Deum" by the date of the American Prayer Book would also be following the method of some with the psalms. Can we date the "Te Deum" by the tone of its content? Were the first and second hymns of the "Te Deum" composed in a time of triumph and the last stanza in a period of humiliation? This is not according to the facts in the case, but such ideas are so plausible that the method has

been freely applied to the dating of the Psalms.

Peters' whole thesis is that the Psalms should be treated as psalms composed for their peculiar purpose and not as occasional poems. Psalm 42, for instance, he says, was composed at the sources of the Jordan, not, however, by an exile as generally supposed, but at the heretical temple of Dan. The Psalms are to be treated from two standpoints and from two only, devotional and liturgical. Hymns and devotional literature in general rarely contain extraneous matter by which they can be dated. There are rare exceptions. One old litany that prays for deliverance from the Lombards could be dated. Psalm 74 contains a cry, "They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land." There is no mention of synagogues until 242 B.C. Antiochus did burn up all the synagogues in the land in 188 B.C.; this does not argue that the psalm was written after 242 B.C., but rather that, up to that time, the collection of psalms was not considered so sacred but that it could have additions to suit the occasion. This whole review is a plea for the true historical method in approaching the problem of the interpretation of the Psalms.

### **Rural Religious Problems**

Hon. Gifford Pinchot, writing in *Rural Manhood* for January, 1916, calls attention to some important problems in connection with the religious life of the country. He notes the modern tendency to consider things which are really fundamental. This is illustrated by the movement for efficiency in the United States, and also by the increased recognition of the importance of all questions relating to the farmer. The Country Life Commission appointed by the president in 1907 was like "a splash in the still pool of country life, the ripples of which have been widening ever since." The close interdependence of city and country is now being recognized, and the fact

that the country is a feeder of the religious life of the town and city makes the question of the religious life of the country a very important one.

Two things at present stand in the way of an efficient country ministry: in the first place, the salary is so meager that the best men are not attracted, and those who do become ministers make the country field a stepping-stone to what they look upon as a wider field; in the second place there is a lack of specific training of a kind that will fit a man for the greatest measure of efficiency in his country pastorate. For, just as the farmer is a skilled worker, so he must have skilled teachers and ministers, adapted to his needs, with his point of view in their minds, and this necessitates specialized training in our schools and seminaries. The Young Men's Christian Association and the church are the very best agencies to act as mediators between the farmers and the cities. Questions of economic welfare must be considered if the fundamental conditions of human welfare are to be understood. "It is the function of the Christian church, in the country and in the city, to take its stand on the side of right, not only in spiritual affairs but in those affairs which are not generally so recognized, in the matters which underlie human economic welfare, in agriculture, co-operation, and other economic matters on which hang that great question of whether or not the earth and all that God put in it for the use of men, shall be used fairly and impartially for all."

### **Departmental Religion**

In his recently published Gifford Lectures, Mr. Balfour has declared his discontent "with any form of Theism which does not sustain in every essential part the full circle of human interests." This position is commended in an article contributed by Rt. Rev. J. W. Diggle, D.D., in the January number of the *Hibbert Journal*, and the

dangers of making God a "departmental Deity" are ably argued against. In apostolic times the notion of a broad, elemental distinction between things secular and things sacred was not recognized. They scouted the doctrine that social, civic, weekday matters had no relationship to God. In their view everything in earth that was not sinful was derived from God and belonged to him. A man's time, money, and talents were not his own but belonged to God. It is true that there are special times and special places for special touch and communion with God. Such are Sunday, the church and the Holy Table, the Bible and the place of habitual prayer; yet, after all, the purpose of these is to convey universal sanctity to all other seasons, books, places, and times. The Bible, for example, is a practical guide for individuals and for nations, teaching them how God operates in the world and how righteousness must be established; it is not merely a revelation of the life which is to come. So too the church was never intended to be set off against the state in a kind of antagonism, and as an end in itself. The church is a means by which the entire world is to be made Christian, to be changed from bottom to top, to be regenerated altogether and in every part. How far the church has failed really to Christianize the world, how deplorably departmental and non-permeating our average Christianity is, the present war shows. The church has failed to hold up boldly the precepts and ideals of its Lord; it has not really believed in their practicability for the present world. It has put "common-sense" before the uncommon sense and uncommon spirit which are characteristic of the true church. The foolishness of the Cross must be the common-sense of the church. To disbelieve in the ideals of Christ, or dub them impracticable, is essentially to charge *him* with folly. Yet this is what is being done by all who believe that God can rightly manage the depart-

ment of the church, but disallow his practical ability to guide and administer the various departments of the world; who consider him careful for the church but careless about the state; who yield him homage in the department of worship but keep the department of war in their own hands. "One sure result of confining religion to any single department of human life is ultimately to expel it from all departments; and a church which tries to keep God to itself will in the end find that both God and the world keep away from it."

### New Testament Criticism

The terms "critic" and "criticism" have come to have sinister associations in the popular mind, writes Professor W. A. Curtis, D.D., in an article contributed to the *London Expositor* for January, 1916, and this is especially evident in what is technically known as higher criticism, largely because of the irreverent and tactless methods employed by many of the critics. When we speak of higher critics and higher criticism we are employing terms which, though they have become convenient bywords of popular abuse, have a perfectly honorable and exact scientific value. Higher criticism can be best understood by considering it in relation to lower criticism. The latter concerns itself with the business of securing an accurate and authentic *text* of a book, and is essentially textual criticism. Higher criticism assumes an authentic text and is occupied with the investigation of its literary contents and the problems which they suggest. Now, Matthew Arnold's conception of literary criticism raises the critic's work to the level of literary and spiritual interpretation. So, to the writer, New Testament criticism means something wider and deeper than the study of the text and canon and language and authorship and setting of the New Testament writings. It means nothing less than the interpretation of the New Testament by every serviceable and

rightful means. It stands in the closest possible relation to systematic or dogmatic theology without invading its province. It tells us what the New Testament says as accurately as scientific methods may. It makes clear to us the historic mind of Jesus as uttered in the Gospels or echoed in later apostolic teachings, and leaves us to draw our own conclusions, to accept or reject the teacher's message. It may be thought that there is no scope for further scholarly investigation of New Testament problems, since it has so long been the object of study. But as a matter of fact the researches of scholars and explorers in recent years have been throwing floods of light upon the historical, literary, social, and religious background of the Gospels, and the scenes and setting of the labors of St. Paul. The New Testament is becoming a new book in many ways in our time, and the present age will leave it to its successors a far more intelligible and vivid record of divine grace than it has ever been since the age which wrote and first received it. The New Testament is coming into its own again by steady strides. It has endured a century of incessant curiosity and controversy, but it is emerging with its own matchless equanimity and dignified serenity. It is true that the nations seem at present to be living upon an international level which is Old Testament in its spirit, but it may be that they are being prepared through the bitter experiences of war and jealousy and hatred to look with an Old Testament wistfulness toward a new era of peace and good-will established on more secure foundations. The church and the university can render noble service at this time by communicating to the world the spirit of the New Testament, the spirit of the Man of Sorrows, the Vanquisher of Death, the Prince of Peace.

#### Origin and Date of First Gospel

"At the present day," writes Rev. H. H. B. Ayles, D.D., in the *Interpreter* for

January, 1916, "it is generally recognized that the Gospel of St. Mark is the source from which both St. Matthew and St. Luke have taken a large part of the Gospels which bear their names. The considerations which support this conclusion are so weighty that there is no longer any room for doubt." The whole of St. Mark's Gospel, except in a few verses, is contained either in St. Matthew or St. Luke. Where one of the two omits any section, the other retains it. And not only is this true, but the sections are arranged in the same order. There are also similarities of construction reproduced in St. Matthew and St. Luke, and in certain long passages almost all the words are identical (e.g., Mark 2:8-22; Matt. 9:4-17; Luke 5:22-39). Another portion of St. Matthew's Gospel comprises the sections which he has in common with St. Luke, but which are not contained in St. Mark. These sections agree to a great extent in order of arrangement and have also a remarkable verbal similarity. It has been generally supposed that St. Luke borrowed from St. Matthew and that this accounts for the similarity. The writer prefers to assume, however, that St. Matthew and St. Luke had a common origin, namely, the *Logia* of St. Matthew. This is supported by tradition, e.g., the saying of Papias, "Matthew compiled the *Logia* in the Hebrew tongue and each one interpreted them as he could." It is also supported by internal probability; for it is quite in accordance with what might have been expected that such a collection of our Lord's sayings would be compiled before any fuller account of his life and ministry was felt to be needed.

In regard to the date of the First Gospel, two considerations render it difficult to suppose that it was written after the fall of Jerusalem. The first of these is the author's own view of our Lord's return. He not merely regards the fall of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ as one and the same,

nor does he simply expect our Lord's return in the *immediate* future, but he has altered his source in order to emphasize this idea. Thus, in Matt. 24:3, St. Mark's phrase "the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled," has been changed to "the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world." And similar changes are made in other passages. A second argument against the later date is that the state of things depicted in the First Gospel would have been impossible after the fall of Jerusalem. The temple is represented as still in existence and its sacrifices are still being offered. The temple tax is still collected and is paid to Jewish, not Roman, authorities. Jewish tribunals are still able to persecute, scourge, and even put to death, etc. On the other hand, the date could not have been much earlier than 70 A.D., for the Gospel of St. Mark can scarcely be earlier than 60 A.D., and so the First Gospel, being based on it, must be later still. A date between 63 and 66 will naturally and satisfactorily account for all the phenomena. "We have as great certainty as can reasonably be expected in literary questions for dating the First Gospel before the fall of Jerusalem."

### The Revival of Casuistry

That there is at the present time a real revival of casuistry is the contention of Rev. J. M. E. Ross, B.D., in the *London Expositor* for December, 1915. Casuistry is not a crime but a science. The word is derived from *casus*, which means a case of conscience, when conscience is in a strait between two or more courses. There are two types of casuistry: there is what may be called the casuistry of the minimum, which is the desire to do the minimum of what is right and so get off as easily as possible. It is with this type that the evil associations of the word have grown up. But there is also the casuistry of the maximum, or the desire to do the maximum and so come as close as possible to the divine

will. There are many honest and scrupulous souls who, without any desire to shrink from their obligations, also without any ecclesiastical spur to urge them farther than their own consciences would take them, are genuinely puzzled by the old problem of living. They honestly want to know how far high principle can be put into practice and how far traditional belief may be held in the modern environment. Here then is work for the nobler casuistry yet to do.

The first phase of casuistry began with the rise of auricular confession. When the confessional became an authoritative guide for human conduct, some scheme of clear thinking was necessary as a guide to fathers-confessor and penitents, and this was supplied by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa*. In this great work the difficult science of ethical distinction was admirably defined, but the system carried with it the seeds of its inevitable and speedy decay. In the second phase, the confessional itself has gone, and the student finds himself chiefly in an Anglican atmosphere, with such books as Jeremy Taylor's *Doctor Dubitantium*, and Bishop Sanderson's *Nine Cases of Conscience Occasionally Determined*. The casuistry of this period is less minute and more elastic than that which preceded it, and when authority is appealed to, it is more the authority of the Scriptures and less that of the church. A movement is seen in the direction of personal responsibility and the right and duty of private judgment. During recent years there has been a new phase of casuistry developing—the journalistic phase. It is seen in the correspondence columns of religious newspapers such as the *British Weekly* and the *Christian Commonwealth*. The man behind the column is the modern substitute for the casuist of long ago. While it is in some respects a depressing thought that so many people are unable or unwilling to settle things for themselves, it is also true that

the questioning instinct is a proof of a further advance of mankind. But though there is a danger lest this new type of casuistic guidance may encourage the parasitic type of character, there is a real need of help in facing modern ethical problems, such for example, as life on the stock exchange. "The popularity of the newspaper confessional shows that many hearts hunger for personal and practical guidance in faith and conduct; it also hints to us where the pastoral office may be failing at present for lack of thorough training adapted to modern needs."

### Did Jesus Repent?

Though the church has always said, and said it with emphasis, that Jesus did not repent, and that he had nothing for which he needed to repent, a different view is maintained by Rev. N. J. Mecklem, in the *Review and Expositor* for January, 1916. While strongly upholding the sinlessness of Jesus, he puts forth the seeming paradox that "Jesus is the sinless one because he repented." Various answers have been given to the question, Why did Jesus submit to the baptism of repentance? Dr. Briggs, following Hippolytus, says it was to set a good example to his disciples. Dr. Plummer thinks with Tertullian that the remission of sins had reference to a future remission. He claims that its main aspect was "preparation for the kingdom of God." The Messiah who needed no repentance could yet accept the preparation. The Gospel of John represents the baptism of Jesus as the means by which John the Baptist was to discover and proclaim the Messiah, but the writer thinks this was not the whole reason. Again, it is said that Jesus is the representative of a guilty race, or the bearer of the sins of others, or acts in solidarity with his people. As the representative of man he must symbolize the remission of the world's sin. There is no doubt some truth here, though the whole truth is obscured. The idea of

substitution has held too prominent a place. The writer thinks that Jesus did repent and that by repenting he fulfilled all righteousness. But his repentance was not of the kind we usually think of, namely, repentance for personal sin. Jesus lived in an age and among a people in which the prevalent conception of the Kingdom of God was mainly political and materialistic. His own conception was primarily spiritual. To him the Kingdom consisted in a society of renewed men, who lived in harmony with the will of God. Faith and repentance were proclaimed by John to be the conditions of entrance into that Kingdom. But repentance is a change of mind and that probably was the principal idea John had in mind when he called the multitudes to repentance. "You need a new viewpoint; your ideas of life are wrong," he told them in effect. The mere fact that they were Jews was not sufficient. Now, though Jesus was without personal sin, that fact did not blot out all sense of human solidarity and human brotherhood. He could not disentangle himself from membership in the existing social order. So far he had lived his life without public protest against the evils of his day. If his conviction be true that this life is based upon wrong principles and that a radical change is necessary shall he not declare his conviction and give himself henceforth to this new purpose in life? Thus, his repentance was what we may call a "social repentance." And it may be added, such a repentance is necessary in every age when there is an unrighteous social order. In addition to his sorrow for personal sins, the need of which is emphasized in evangelical preaching, the Christian needs a sorrow for the sins of the world, a change of mind about them, and a new purpose in regard to them. Like Christ, we must "identify ourselves with the holiness which condemns sin, and condemn it all along the way. We need that kind of repentance."

### **Theological Education in the Light of Present-Day Demands**

"The modern age which is considered as being altogether unique and which is making radical demands along every line of thought insists that in theological education there should be a complete readjustment, if not a sweeping revolution." Such was the declaration of Rev. J. Ross Stevenson in an address delivered on the occasion of his inauguration as president of Princeton Theological Seminary and reported in the January number of the *Harvard Theological Review*. He then proceeds to discuss four demands which he believes his church (the Presbyterian) is making upon the theological seminary today. The first and most fundamental demand is for trained ministers of apostolic character. The call is now, as at the beginning of the Seminary's life one hundred years ago, for men "prepared to make every sacrifice, to endure every hardship, and to render every service which the promotion of pure and undefiled religion may require." The seminary must be "a nursery of vital piety," since "without the spirit of enlightened devotion and fervent piety all other acquisitions would be of comparatively little worth." One of the weak points in seminary training is "lack of spiritual culture," according to the report of a special committee appointed by the General Assembly to look into the matter of theological education, and the professors are charged with the responsibility of being pastors to the students, in order that they may foster their spiritual life. The church is also demanding of our seminaries that they send out men of large positive faith and all aflame with a vital message. There are disintegrating tendencies in these modern times which affect our conception

of divine revelation and the supernatural, and threaten the faith of present-day students. But the students must be led to face such tendencies with unflinching honesty and courage under the guidance of teachers who have fought their way through on their knees to the position of an attested faith and an irresistible testimony. Again, there is a demand for a theological education equal to the social as well as the individual application of the gospel. "Individual evangelization sooner or later compels social amelioration." "To overcome the evils of selfish competition with the sacrificial ministry of Christ's gospel, to establish a city of God in which there will be no slums, is the task of the church of the living God, which demands an especially qualified ministry, which it is the business of theological education to provide." Finally, the church is demanding a ministry that has a national and international outlook and a humanity-embracing passion. This demand is accentuated by the present situation among the nations. "The religion of Jesus is the only religion which contemplates the international problem, and claims to furnish the ideal and the power for its realization." The opportunities for service in the foreign mission field also emphasize this demand for a world-outlook. Princeton is compelled by the legacy of the missionary achievements of her own sons to enlarge and enrich these achievements by training according to the highest standards those who are to engage in missionary service. For any time, but more particularly for the time just before us, there can be no higher, nobler calling than that of leading the forces which are to establish the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ which is to rule over all and endure forever.